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## THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

### PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

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#### THE REALLY REAL

IN the course of his criticism a recent reviewer remarks of a certain volume of poems, "No one will expect the life-blood of realism in a book which blazons on its first page, 'Dedicated to Reality.' " The paradox may at first appear to result from the purely adventitious coincidence in the name of an esthetic and a metaphysical theory; yet there remains the haunting question: Is, then, the reality which the artist seeks to represent in sensuous imagery entirely distinct from the reality which the philosopher searches out in the naked simplicity of reason? Reality is a term so hallowed by tradition and yet so ever vital in the realms of ideal society, of Science, of Art, and of Religion; there have been and there are to-day so many men proudly boasting of their "realism" and yet differing so profoundly among themselves as to just what constitutes that "reality" which claims their devotion, that one is tempted to marvel at the vagaries of the human spirit, and to ask, with a vague sense of disillusion reminiscent of an earlier inquirer, "What is reality?"

There is a sense, of course, in which this question becomes the starting point of the philosophic quest, and to essay an answer would mean the setting forth on that long and arduous pilgrimage. Yet it is possible to ask the question in another mood, and to seek to discover, not the distant goal, but the nature of that inward urge which bids men seek it. One man returns and proclaims that he has found reality at last; that it is a wondrous land, a land passing the comprehension of those dull souls who have been content never to wander outside their own dooryards. Another comes back, after weary seeking, to discover it at home amidst the flowers and birds of his own garden. A third refuses to make any lengthy journey; he marches straightway to his stable and pokes in his dung-heap, exclaiming, as the hideous crawling things are exposed writhing in the sun, "Reality? Here alone is reality!" Another trods the well-beaten path to the neighboring chapel, another wanders down a lane with his beloved, still another searches in the slums of the great

city. And all the while the master of the house and his guest are seated at table, the one exclaiming, "Ah, but this is reality!" while the other rejoins, "There is no reality! Bring up another bottle!" There can be found, in fact, no place, however likely or unlikely, in which some seeker has not discovered the goal of his search; and all unite in paying homage to it under the common title of "reality." What, then, is this reality which beckons men on, yet never seems the same; which claims their allegiance, yet forever eludes their ken? Science is its comprehension, Art its expression, Religion its worship; it is the universal object of ideal society, and yet it is the cause of all those dissensions which break up ideal society into hostile and warring groups. Philosopher demolishes the system of his brother philosopher, artist rips up the canvas of his fellow artist, worshipper calls down the wrath of heaven upon his co-religionist, and all invoke in their aid the same god, the same reality. It does indeed appear as if a recent writer might be right when he said that reality seemed to be having its little joke upon the realists.

It would be useless, by pointing out the errors of previous thinkers and proclaiming another solution to the quest for the real, to inject a new source of contention into this welter of confusion and discord. Yet with realists on all hands in violent disagreement it is perhaps profitable to consider, if not what reality is, still what it means in human experience; what are its nature and function in those realms of ideal society which crown the Life of Reason. In the judgment, "This is real," with which the scientist refutes the man of common sense, the Platonist the scientist, the art critic the Platonist, and the statesman the art critic, what is it which these men of differing interest mean by the term they so freely bandy about?

Primarily, of course, "real" is a term implying a certain ontological status, and as such it contains a whole metaphysic of its own. This has been developed in scholasticism, that philosophic system whose rigid adherence to common sense notions has robbed it of the delightful wonders of more startling and deliciously upsetting views. There, "real" has been used as the adjective corresponding to "being," and the ontological question has become one of distinctions within being, of different kinds of reality. But this primary and colorless definition has never satisfied more adventurous souls; nor, in truth, has it exerted much influence among men at large. Turn to any dictionary and read through the dozen odd definitions there given of "real"; and in every case you will find that it is not an epithet descriptive of being in general, but rather a distinction made within it. When a man exclaims, "This is real," especially if

he be so impressed as to make of his discovery the basis of an artistic or a philosophic system, he means something very different indeed than if he had merely remarked, "This is," or "This has being," and the difference lies precisely in the "this." That which is real is, in common parlance as in more philosophical jargon, always set over against and opposed to that which is not real, or less real, or not "really" real. And, try as he may, the man who makes such a distinction can not refrain from a certain condescension, a certain patronizing air, toward that which he has assigned to a less exalted seat in his pantheon of being.

It is this enlisting of personal preference in behalf of certain ontological distinctions which makes the conflicting realisms so bitter and uncompromising toward each other. An artist could, perhaps, look with some measure of tolerance upon a brother artist who confessed a personal delight in portraying certain types of experience; but when that second artist insists that he is a "realist," that he is expressing things as they really are, he has committed the unpardonable sin, and no sarcasm is too biting to pour upon the miserable miscreant who has committed the supreme artistic hybris. One can accordingly fancy the thoughts in the mind of the framer of the definition of realism in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, when he asserts that "the realist is he who deliberately declines to select his subjects from the beautiful or harmonious, and, more especially, describes ugly things and brings out details of an unsavory sort." Or one can picture the pitying scorn of the poet who dedicated the volume to Reality for the poor mortal who imagined a careful depicting of the outward trappings of life could express what life really is. And, on the other side, we know the contempt with which a political realist like M. Clemenceau regards the vaporings of vague idealism anent a league of nations and a world without wars. It is not so much the fact that the enlightened prefer to worship the Devil that matters; it is that they maliciously call him God.

To say, then, that a certain class of objects is "real," always implies that a distinction is being made; there is another complementary class which is not real. As Santayana remarks, man has an innate idealizing tendency, and has always been prone to look beyond the changing flux of immediate experience for something more permanent, something transcending the sense-world and its imperfections; and this something beyond, this realm of reason and not of sense, has been for those who have gazed upon it the ontologically fundamental, reality. In contradistinction to these Platonic spirits there have always been those who insisted that the real was not that which formed the object of mind, but rather the tangible and visible

objects which they met with in their daily experience. Protest and counter protestation: these have been, again and again, the history of man's spiritual adventures, and each new affirmation of reality has been equally a denial of reality to that which some other group has held dear.

So true is it that "reality" has been the name men have given to certain phases of experience which appealed to them as being fundamental that it is quite possible to classify individuals on the basis of what they hold to be real. A story is related of a man in a railway compartment who offered to tell his companions' professions if they would but answer a single question. He asked them, "What is life?" and from their responses he was able to reveal their souls. An even clearer insight could have been gained had the query run, "What is real?" The Platonist, the Aristotelian, the artist with his vision of perfection, the painter with his "realistic" portrait, the Utopian, the stern Realpolitiker—all would give away their secrets if they truly answered so searching a question. And such a classification would have many advantages over the arbitrary and artificial ones philosophers are wont to employ. It might indeed prove that definitions of reality reveal less about the ultimate nature of the universe than about their authors' souls.

For not only is "real" a distinction and an antithesis; it is also essentially a category of laudation and a judgment of value. A thing is not real merely because it happens to *be*; it must fulfil other conditions before it can be elevated to the supreme ontological rank. In this respect "reality" differs radically from "existence." The latter is a purely ontological category, to be awarded on the basis of experimental evidence, but it conveys in itself no implication of approbation. Indeed, there are those who, like Plato, regard a thing's existence as in some sense a degradation of its reality. Reality is rather an attribute pertaining to certain values, an honorary rank to which they are promoted; and as such, what values will be accounted real naturally depends upon the criterion and standard adopted by the realist. It is for this reason that what a man holds to be real is such an excellent test of his spirit, for it is a test primarily of his standards, his intellectual, moral, and artistic criteria.

Thus the logical realist fixes his gaze upon the chaste beauty of immutable form, and, putting beneath him as unworthy all thoughts of the kaleidoscopic flux of existence and the encroaching finger of time, yearns to dwell forever in that eternal universe. To call such pure forms "reality" is a judgment of value by no means attractive to those with a deep love for the warmth and immediacy of concrete experience, and we have men who, like James and Bergson, find real-

ity in the rich flow of life itself and disdainfully discard intellectual forms as the mere slaves of the really real. Still others find no reality in life; for them it is to be discovered in objects and things, in the discrete and pluralistic conglomeration of physical nature in which they find themselves. The artist will indignantly reject the photograph, with the curling lip, "That is not the real man, that is but his corpse," and strive to express, in perchance some weird drawing, his very soul; while his fellow will bewail the idealizations of the shallow throng, and paint the harlot at her blackest. No artist can escape the necessity of making this selection and of depicting reality according to his own judgment; even Zola, that arch apostle of the mirror theory of art, was forced to define it as "a slice of nature seen through a temperament." Or if we turn to morals we discover the same evaluating tendency. The Realpolitiker thinks in terms of power and armies and economic forces because they are the things which are valuable to attain his own ends; hence they are the realities of the situation, and he overlooks the importance of the imponderables, as the shrewder Bismarck called them, because he is in his nature so blunted that he is unable to reckon their value as contributions toward his goal. The ethical dreamer is likewise led by the supreme value he places on his vision of the perfect society to slight the obstacles in the way of its practical attainment; they do not constitute real problems for him because they are the bitter dream, not the reality to come. And if we turn to the religious life, we are met on one side with the proud boast, "I am a realist; I do not bother about God. Of that hypothesis I have no need," and on the other the mystic tells us, "God is the only reality; all other things are worthless compared with the supernal joy of His presence." There is no part of the Life of Reason to which we can turn to discover reality without having it duly impressed upon us that "reality" is a blend of fact and value, and that the determining element is the value.

This merging of the field of fact and the field of value might well invite censure did it obliterate a real distinction; and it is undeniable that man has had a tendency, not only to hypostatize his values, but to confuse them with existence itself. One has but to turn to the record of the subtler theological speculation of religious souls to behold the ease with which the supreme values of divinity are ascribed to the supreme physical power of the universe. This identification, this inverted physics, as Santayana calls it, is indeed a confusion of realms which, on the face of it, appears to have no logical justification; and it has bred in the past no end of trouble, not only for the natural order, thus gratuitously endowed with moral

values to which it modestly made no claim (which might have been expected), but even more for the realm of values itself. The identification of the good or the beautiful with the existent has given birth to the problem of evil and the problem of ugliness; and the latter, for a sensitive soul like Plato, might well assume the monumental proportions of the former. This problem, when it has received rational consideration, has inevitably resulted in the dulling of the moral and the esthetic senses, and the subtle assimilation of the value to the existence whose original purpose was merely to add another jewel to the crown of the good and the beautiful.

But the merging of fact and value which every attribution of reality exemplifies does not operate to obliterate such a distinction. In it, value is not assimilated to existent fact, but rather is fact assimilated to value; and the sting is removed by the sharp distinction usually preserved between reality and existence. In many cases, to be sure, existence is taken as the basis of value, and hence indirectly does become the reason for the attribution of reality; but this, far from proving that "real" is not essentially a category of laudation, merely impugns the validity of the criterion of value subscribed to by the particular realist. And one can not escape the conviction, after the salutary tragedy of the rise and fall of that empire founded on "realistic" politics, that even when existence is consciously assumed as the standard of value the practical outcome reveals other and less obvious bases of selection. On the other hand, the ascription of reality to a certain class of objects, even when it so far approaches existence as to imply a distinct power, means only that such an object is capable of inspiring in him who has hypostatized it devotion and emulation; when it does partake of the nature of cause, it is always as final and never as efficient cause that it operates. The boundary between the ideal and the existent is kept clear and distinct; the honorary appellation of "real" is, as it were, like one of those Papal titles of nobility which elevate the holder without imposing upon him the burden of a seat in the House of Lords, and the title remains equally a mark of honor whether the Pope bestows it upon some obscure benefactor of the church or, as some Popes might prefer, upon some proud British peer.

If, then, it may be regarded as established that "real" is a distinction made in experience on the basis of value, and that the confusion noted in all the realms of ideal society springs from a varying standard of value rather than from differences as to experimental proof of precise ontological status, it must be admitted that much light has been thrown upon the original question of the function of reality in human experience. The quest of reality, which we found

to be the goal of Science, of Art, and of Religion, and which we found resulted in so much of disagreement and dissension, resolves itself into the search for standards of value, not of existence; and the Life of Reason becomes just such a development and criticism of values and criteria. It can not be expected that the artist will ever allow a dispassionate examination of existence to determine for him what is real, and that he will then abjure his former ways and devote himself wholeheartedly to the expression in plastic medium of that empirically verified reality. He might well retort that the mere fact of the existence of such and such salient characteristics in nature and in man was indeed interesting, but that it hardly touched his art; his task was to reflect man and his world, not as he seemed, but as he really was, and that "really" would let in again the whole gamut of the artistic schools. Nor will either the Utopian or the Realpolitiker accept the results of a future science of society as the final arbiter of the exact nature of political life. Undisturbed by the results of careful analysis, the former will continue striving to realize the reality he has beheld in the sky, while the latter will continue to ignore those qualities in human nature which fail to minister to his aims. And no searching of the heavens in vain with the latest instrument of the astronomer will convince the religious soul that he does not know the Living God. It is not by any description of existence that these opposed schools can ever be united as to what is real. It is only by a reasoned criticism of values, and by the carrying forward of a process of harmonization and adjustment in the light of some higher standard, some greater and more inclusive criterion, that men can hope to achieve some measure of, not, in truth, agreement, but of tolerance and insight into each other's hearts. Only then, out of the fullness of their ripened wisdom, can they cooperate in the enjoyment of the rich symphony of those values which are found to have their place in a well-rounded Life of Reason.

And, specifically, this conclusion as to the function of reality has a direct bearing upon the theories of those modern thinkers who have arrogated to themselves the honor of being the only complete and thoroughgoing realists, and find great difficulty in denying even to the pathetic and orphaned round-square that reality which they so generously bestow on all else that comes within their ken. To such "neo-realistic" followers of Meinong "real" has virtually ceased to have a meaning; they are concerned, not with drawing a distinction, but with insisting that distinctions drawn by those who lovingly bestowed reality upon their favorite objects have no validity, and with reducing the whole universe, from the veriest raving of the



maniac to the existent rock, to precisely the same ontological status. Between such men and idealists like Bradley, who likewise seek to obliterate distinctions by denying reality to anything, even as they themselves affirm it of everything, there is little to choose; except, indeed, as the idealists restore what they have destroyed by their saving doctrine of degrees of truth and reality. Such thinkers identify "reality" with the colorless "being," and it is indeed possible to pursue such a course. But then it is necessary to introduce once more, this time within reality, those very distinctions which have just been so laboriously smoothed over, and there hardly appears a sufficient reason for thus expunging from the philosophical vocabulary a term of such time-honored service and such potent appeal as "reality." Such a procedure seems scarcely consonant with that sharpening of critical powers and that increasing delicacy of refinement upon which the hope of the development of more perfect standards and more harmonious adjustments of values seems to rest.

The potency of "real," in fact, as a philosophical instrument, lies precisely in its ability to gather into a single focus those varied values which claim men's devotion and to free them of the meaningless accretions of existence. It is by this power of clarification that it has revealed the path which has enabled men to advance toward their chosen goals. This the present-day realists throw overboard, preferring the fullness of vision which springs from an equal insistence upon all the richly varied content of experience to that singleness of aim and that peace of soul which come only with an ordered arrangement of the generous gifts of life into a universe, a universe at whose head stands a clearly envisaged reality.

In contradistinction to such an ordered achievement of reason the universe of the new realists appears without vistas, without paths leading to any particular goal. To some, indeed, the very superabundance with which it has been provided, the rich intricacy of its interlacing structure, proves more of an impediment than an aid. They feel choked, stifled, by the luxuriant tangle, and have a sense of struggle against the bonds which tie them hand and foot and constrict the free movement of their limbs. When, for instance, one is called, on looking upon an empty white canvas, to see there all the pictures which have ever been painted, together with the infinitely greater number of those which might have been, but have not yet inspired the painter's brush, one's imagination is overwhelmed and dulled, and one longs for the clear vision which will reveal, not such a riot of confused forms, but the one picture which the urgings of the soul impel the artist to set down, the *real* picture amidst all the

goblins and wraiths of a dead past and an unborn future. There is an indescribably eery sensation resulting from the vivid realization of such a universe, which, curiously enough, seems all ghost just because all real, just because there are no high lights. The doctrine of Bruno comes to mind, that where all is thus actual all is at the same time potential, and one can not help feeling that somehow one has left the sunlit paths where familiar things are what they seem for a strange enchanted forest where in most disconcerting fashion opposites merge into one. And one joyfully welcomes the ringing challenge of Bertrand Russell that realism must preserve its distinctions. He at least recognizes the true meaning of reality, and like some medieval mystic he proclaims that all experience is appearance and mere sensibilia; the world of reality is not what it seems, but is motionless and frozen in its icy precision, yet bathed withal in a wondrous light. One may not agree with him in overlooking man in his insignificance, but one can not help admiring the boldness with which he defies that which for him has supreme value. His is not the lazy tolerance of an indifferent spirit; he has a new gospel to preach, and he is not afraid to condemn the idolatry of the pagan.

It behooves all searchers after reality, therefore, especially if they claim to be realists, to remember that they are seeking to make a distinction in experience, nay, to make the supreme distinction, that between what merely is and what is real. And it is well for them to bear in mind, as they pursue this philosophic quest, whether they be lovers of wisdom who would comprehend the real through reason, or artists who would formulate it in plastic beauty, or statesmen who would lead mankind to a greater enjoyment of its fruits, or religious souls who would simply fall down and worship it, that that which is the object of their differing endeavor is essentially a value, the Supreme Value, whose elaboration and further development lies not in the mere discovery of fact or the delimitation of existence, but in the harmonizing and synthesizing process of the Life of Reason.

J. HERMAN RANDALL, JR.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

#### A NOTE ON THE RELATION OF PSYCHOLOGY TO ANTHROPOLOGY

IN his recent address at St. Louis,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Aleš Hrdlička has made a candid attempt to resolve a vexed and complicated problem, the problem of the mutual relations of anthropology and psychology. No one who has followed the fortunes of that section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Section H), which has

<sup>1</sup> *Science*, LI., 199-201, February 27, 1920.